

13

SPEECH

OF

HON. MR. CLEMENS, OF ALABAMA,

AT

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA, MONDAY, NOV. 4, 1850.

Mr. CLEMENS said:

FELLOW-CITIZENS: Notwithstanding the attacks which have been made upon me, I have, since my return from Congress, sought to avoid all controversy upon questions connected with slavery. I have refused to attend several public dinners to which I have been invited, chiefly because the remarks necessarily elicited on such occasions might become the subjects of animadversion. Even now I would willingly postpone any personal defence, and leave it to time to justify my course. But I have been connected with the settlement of questions of immense magnitude, and it is important that they should not be misunderstood or further misrepresented. Of almost equal importance is the necessity of controverting certain dangerous doctrines which have recently become familiar to us all. I hold in my hand one of a number of similar articles which have attracted my attention:

"Whoever has observed the tone of the press and the proceedings of public meetings in South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas, cannot fail to see that the feeling of dissatisfaction is deep and wide-spread, pervading all classes of the community, and so strong as to break down long-standing party barriers. The ablest men of the South of both political parties, are leaders in this movement. They are anything else but factionists. They do not regard secession as merely inevitable, or as a calamity to be avoided, but as an object most desirable—not the least of two evils, but, under the circumstances, a positive blessing."

Mark the language! Secession is not to be resorted to as a *remedy* for oppression—not as a painful evil, rendered inevitable by tyranny and injustice—but as something good in itself—as a *positive blessing*. When doctrines like these are openly promulgated, it becomes those who entertain different opinions to place them in some form before the public. I have therefore called you, my old neighbors and friends, together, to speak to you of peace, of harmony, of the prosperity and glory of our common country. When violent speeches

might do good, I was ready enough to make them. When harsh language could by possibility effect anything for the South, I did not hesitate to employ it. But a different state of things now exists. After a long and bitter contest, a settlement has been made. Good men everywhere are sighing for repose; and the question for us to determine is, whether there is anything in the circumstances that surround us to forbid a return to the usual quiet avocations of life.

I need not refer to any complaint made by any section of the Union prior to the meeting of the present Congress. With all that you are perfectly familiar. But, in order to arrive at just conclusions, it will be necessary to review the acts which have since passed, and which are now the causes of wide and deep agitation. I propose to show you what you have lost and what you have gained. Your own good sense will then teach you what your interest and your duty require.

You have lost the whole of California, with its vast mineral wealth, and still more valuable command of the Pacific trade. There was no precedent to justify her admission as a State—no pretence of equity to redeem the outrage. The number of her population was unknown, and the character of it, according to the Governor's message, ought to have been a bar to any application of hers to become a member of the Confederacy. That Congress should have overlooked these and the many other objections to her admission was not only unfortunate, but criminal. The most violent secessionist cannot go further than I in denouncing an act so palpably unjust. We may differ as to the remedy, but not at all as to the wrong. It must, however, be borne in mind that the northern States are not alone responsible; that in fact their share is even less than our own. A southern President, surrounded by a Cabinet composed of a majority of southern men, first devised the scheme of California admission. Southern men in both branches of Congress and of both parties voted with the North. But for southern men, California would now be a Territory, not a State; and if her admission is to be regarded as a

case of northern aggression, it is an aggression that we ourselves invited and assisted. I have nothing to say of the motives of the late President, or the motives of those who separated themselves from the main body of the southern representatives. I speak of the facts only, and they show that the South must take her full share of the responsibility for whatever has occurred. It is no answer to say that those who differed with the majority are traitors to the South. If they are traitors, we produced them; the sin is ours, and no one else can be held responsible for it. But how do we know they are traitors? Their constituents have not yet repudiated them; and as they are the sole judges of what constitutes treachery to them, we have no right to assume its existence until they have proclaimed it.

Admitting the admission of California to be a great wrong, as I certainly think it was, the next inquiry is, what is the remedy? We cannot secede from the Union on that account, because if we do we shall have to begin with our nearest neighbor, Tennessee. A large majority of her representatives voted for admission. Then we must secede from Kentucky, Virginia, Missouri, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, and Texas. All these States furnished votes for admission.

Cervantes, it is said, laughed chivalry out of Europe by exposing its absurdities in the story of Don Quixote. It would be well for some pen like his to draw a picture of the state of things which certain would-be leaders are now trying to bring about. We must go to war with the Union because Congress has not established the boundaries of Texas precisely as Texas wished, and at the same time we must go to war with Texas because she has aided to bring California into our partnership of States. If such great interests were not at stake, I know of no subject which presents a better field for ridicule.

The next subject of complaint is, that Congress has abolished the slave trade in the District of Columbia; and here I side with the complainants. I do not care one cent whether slaves are sold in the District or not; but I think it is a subject with which Congress had no business to meddle. I regard it as the establishment of a precedent which may be dangerous, and will certainly be made the excuse for further agitation. If Congress can abolish the slave trade, I know no reason why they cannot abolish slavery itself in the District. The question of power depends upon the same clause of the Constitution, and may be as rightfully exercised in one case as in the other. For this act, then, I hold there is no excuse. I believe it to be a serious aggression, one which every patriot ought to regard with distrust and every strict constructionist strongly condemn. I do not, however, believe it to be one of those cases which will justify resistance by secession and civil war. The Supreme Court is the proper tribunal to determine the question, and to that Court I am willing to leave it.

I have gone now as far as I can go with those who are so earnestly engaged in the work of agitation. Their next ground of complaint is one upon which I differ with them *toto callo*. They allege that a portion of Texas has been purchased and given up to free soil; that a slave State has been dismembered to gratify northern fanaticism; and the South is urged to resist by violence an act which had the sanction of a decided majority of

southern men. I desire to know who constituted these agitators exclusive guardians of the rights and honor of the South? They are a minority—a minority in Congress, a minority of States, a minority of individuals in the States. By what right do they assume to decide that the majority are faithless to southern interests, or incompetent to perceive in what southern interests consist? What evidence have they given of superior patriotism or superior sagacity? I doubt whether one in ten of them has ever taken the trouble to examine what is the exact question in dispute. It is so much easier to write resolutions of censure than to study and comprehend a complicated subject, that I apprehend many of them have contented themselves with the performance of the lighter task. At all events, I have not been able to see or hear any attempt to define what is the exact amount of our losses. We are told generally that a part of Texas has been given up; that it is immaterial what may be its extent or its value; that it is a matter of principle; that we ought to demand what is right, and take nothing else. To this I answer, that in every controversy there must be two sides. What one party thinks clearly right, the other may, and very often does, think clearly wrong. Now, according to the reasoning of those gentlemen who have seen fit to censure me, there can be no settlement. Both parties believe themselves right, and neither is allowed to give up anything to the other. War follows, of course, and after they are exhausted and impoverished, they are finally compelled to settle on terms that the exercise of a little common sense might have secured for either in the beginning. This is the legitimate result of the new doctrine which has become so fashionable of late. You may carry it much further, and demonstrate its absurdity more clearly by applying it to the ordinary transactions of private life. Neither is this all: those who urge it are guilty of an inconsistency so glaring as almost to excite the pity of their opponents. They repudiate the Texas boundary bill, and condemn its supporters, because, as they allege, it does not give us *all* our rights. In the very next breath they will tell you they are for the line of 36 deg. 30 min. Ask them if 36 deg. 30 min. gives us all our rights? Oh, no. Has Congress the constitutional power to prohibit slavery north of that line? Certainly not, but we will take it as an extreme concession. What becomes of the principle here? They give up absolutely millions of acres to which their title is just as clear as to any portion of the public domain, and then talk of going to war *on principle* for a narrow strip of ten miles on the Rio Grande. Beautiful consistency! Wise and sagacious instructors of the people! There is no principle involved in surrendering four fifths of the territory acquired from Mexico, and consenting to an unconstitutional prohibition of slavery therein, but Congress must not touch one foot of the valley of the Rio Grande, even with the consent of Texas. Now, I must confess I do not understand what kind of honor that is which at one moment counsels the abandonment of an unquestionable right, and the next forbids the friendly settlement of a doubtful claim; which teaches us to submit to the loss of a vast domain, and then urges us to engage in civil war for a mere trifle. There is no honor in such a course, and, what is quite as much to the purpose, there is no sense in it either.

It seems, however, there is some magic in the addition of the words "as an extreme concession," which takes away the iniquity of giving up to Free-Soilers the whole territory north of 36 deg. 30 min. Well, we will add, "as an extreme concession," to the Texas boundary bill, if it will satisfy the fastidious taste of our opponents. I suppose the words will be as potent in the one case as in the other. But, seriously, I agree with them that 36 deg. 30 min. would have been an extreme concession. It involved the necessity of voting for a measure admitted to be a plain violation of the Constitution. I think we have done better. The boundary of Texas is the subject about which there has been the widest difference of opinion; and, at the risk of being tedious, I shall endeavor to make that question so plain that there can be no misunderstanding it hereafter. I have here a map prepared at the General Land Office since the passage of the act, upon which I propose to show you what Texas claimed, what New Mexico claimed, and what each received by the Senate bill. [Mr. CLEMENS here traced upon the map the original boundaries of Texas, Coahuila, New Mexico, and Chihuahua.]

Now, let us see upon what the claim of New Mexico and Texas was based. Not long since I had occasion to address a letter to the editors of the "Democrat." I can save time by reading an extract from that letter:

"The boundaries of New Mexico, although never defined with great accuracy, were yet sufficiently so to establish the fact that every foot of the territory given to her by the Senate bill was included within her limits. Upon this all the authorities, both of an earlier and a later date agree. Wislizenus, a man of science and of great research, thus describes the boundaries of New Mexico:

"Towards the north and northeast New Mexico meets with the boundaries of the United States, as agreed upon the 22d February, 1819, between the United States and Spain, to wit: that part of the line which runs from Red river, in the 100th degree of longitude west of Greenwich, up to the Arkansas; thence along the Arkansas to its sources; thence in a straight line north to the 42d degree of north latitude, and following the 42d degree to the Pacific. The southeastern boundary of New Mexico is directly connected with the still undecided question of the boundaries of Texas. The limits of the Mexican province of Texas, previous to its revolution, are generally considered the Nueces river on the southwest, the Red river on the north, the Sabine on the east, and the Gulf of Mexico on the southeast. The State of Texas, after its declaration of independence from Mexico in 1836, resolved, as a matter of expediency, to extend the southwestern boundary of Texas from the mouth of the Rio Grande along the river to its source, and up to the 42d degree of north latitude."

"To give Texas the full benefit of all that may be derived from this resolution, I think it right to state, in addition, that Santa Anna, by a treaty executed while he was a prisoner, recognized her claim to the territory within the limits described."

"Chihuahua forms the principal boundary of New Mexico to the south. 'This State claims as its northern boundary towards New Mexico 32 deg. 30 min. latitude north—this line to be projected towards the east to the Rio Pecos, or Puer-

'co.' Humboldt places the northern boundary of Texas at the San Sabá, (about 32 deg. north latitude,) and a late German work by Muehlenpfort places her northern boundary at the same degree of latitude. An essay published in Chihuahua in 1842 contains the following passage:

"The Pecos river forms the dividing line between the State of Chihuahua and that of Coahuila and Texas, from 32 deg. 30 min. north latitude down to its mouth into the Rio Grande."

"I quote again from Wislizenus:

"If we accept now in all directions the widest boundaries for New Mexico, it would extend from 32 deg. 30 min. north latitude to 42 deg., and from 100 deg. to about 114 deg. longitude west of Greenwich; but as the country of the wild Indians has never been under any jurisdiction or control of the Mexicans, and settlements have never extended over the whole country, the name of New Mexico has generally been applied to the settled country between the 32d deg. and 38th deg. latitude north, and from about 104 deg. to 108 deg. longitude west of Greenwich."

"It will thus be seen that New Mexico has always claimed the whole territory ceded to her by the Senate bill; and that the most scientific travelers, men wholly disinterested, have united in denying the claim of Texas. But I do not quote these authorities as conclusive; for I do not so regard them. It is sufficient for my purpose to show that there is a reasonable doubt of the title of Texas—such a doubt as would render a settlement by compromise or agreement proper and expedient."

"I know it has been urged that the title of Texas to the whole territory has been placed beyond dispute by the declaration of war against Mexico. But this argument will not bear examination. Her title to the Lower Rio Grande may have been, and was, as I believe, valid. There she had possession. She had organized counties and established military posts; and, when it was invaded by Mexican troops, that invasion afforded a just cause of war. Her title to that territory has been confirmed; her boundary extends nine hundred miles along the river, from its mouth to the 32d degree of north latitude. But on the Upper Rio Grande a totally different state of affairs existed. Texas did not have possession of a foot of it. The Mexican authorities were in the peaceful exercise of their functions, and the Mexican laws, usages, and customs in full operation. The resolutions of annexation expressly provided that the United States might settle the boundary by negotiation. Texas was always willing to part with any claim she might have if the United States thought proper to dispose of it. The Lower Rio Grande no one ever supposed would be parted with, and accordingly General Taylor was ordered to encamp upon its banks; but the Upper Rio Grande was left in the undisturbed possession of Mexico until hostilities actually commenced."

"The next inquiry is, what is the value of the territory which New Mexico obtains? She gets from 32° to 38° north latitude, and from 103° to 106° west longitude. Of this, the whole is uninhabitable, except the valley of the Rio Grande. The valley of the Rio Grande is about twenty miles in width, or about ten miles on each side. We have, then, given up to New Mexico a strip of country ten miles in width and six degrees of

latitude in length! All east of this is a broken, sandy, desert country, without water, without timber, or even grass. For ninety miles it is so utterly destitute of everything which can support life that the early Spaniards named it *Jornada del Muerto*, or the *Journey of Death*. The remainder is but little better. Everything of value which New Mexico obtains is the valley of the Rio Grande, or rather ten miles of it, on the eastern side. The valley is inhabited by about five hundred Americans, a few Spaniards and Mexicans, and the remainder (more than one half) Pueblo Indians, who profess Christianity—a population which would have added to Texas neither wealth nor strength. So that, if her title was in all respects clear and certain, she might well afford to surrender it for the sum she is to receive. But it has been urged that we could not honorably surrender a foot of ground claimed by Texas because it is a matter of *principle*. How can it be a matter of principle when the title is doubtful—when both parties claim title with equal confidence? Such controversies are always settled between individuals by suit or arbitration—between nations by treaty or war. The boundaries of Maine and Oregon were settled by treaty between the United States and Great Britain; the boundary controversy between Ohio and Michigan was settled by Congress; and that between Iowa and Missouri by suit in the Supreme Court. In all these cases some of the parties gave up what they believed to be a portion of their rights; but whoever heard that the least dishonor attached to them for so doing? Boundaries have been the subject of negotiation, of treaty, of bargain and sale, ever since the world began. Our own State was bought from Georgia. The United States might have refused to buy Alabama and Mississippi; and then, instead of six southern Senators, we should have but two for the whole region between the Savannah and the Mississippi.

“There is another view of the subject which must not be lost sight of. The Senate bill does not settle the boundary of Texas: it simply makes a proposition to her for settlement; and believing, as I do, that she is fully competent to guard her own honor and her own interests, I voted for it.”

According to these authorities, we have given to Texas 36,445 square miles more than was justly hers; for, even if the title of New Mexico was bad in consequence of never having dispossessed the wild Indians, the title of Texas was no better, for she never attempted to dispossess them. This is one side. On the other we have the Texas law of limits, the treaty with Santa Anna, and the proclamation of Peña y Peña after the peace in 1848. I have not seen the proclamation since my return from Mexico, but I recollect it contained an admission that all east of the Rio Grande belonged to Texas. In order that undue importance may not be attached to that proclamation, it must be borne in mind that it was issued to reconcile his countrymen to a distasteful treaty; and that it was manifestly his interest to make the cession of territory appear as small as possible.

This is a perfectly fair statement of both sides of the case; and I think you will agree with me that, in the best aspect, it leaves the title of Texas doubtful. It, at all events, appeared so doubtful to the friends of Texas that they refused to leave the decision of the question to the Supreme Court.

But it has been urged that I voted at one time to confirm the title of Texas to the whole country. Certainly I did, and precisely because it was doubtful. Texas was the weaker party, and I went upon the principle of giving her the benefit of the doubt. Besides, I should have been a poor advocate if, while seeking to get all I could for the South, as under the circumstances I felt fully justified in doing, I had voted that we had no claim to the country. We did have a claim, a disputed claim, it is true, but still a claim, and, until that dispute terminated, I had no idea of assisting the opposite side to weaken my own.

Extracts have also been paraded from a speech of mine in reply to Mr. Foote to prove that I have been inconsistent. Even if this was accomplished, it would not affect the argument. But the attempt was a miserable failure. Mr. Foote had asserted, as I understood him, that the title of Texas was indisputable; and that to cut off a portion of it, as proposed by a bill of Mr. Benton, would be to give it up to free soil. My speech was based upon the hypothesis that he was correct. It was not so much the assertion of my own opinions as a commentary on his, as expressed on two different occasions. Whenever it becomes a matter of sufficient importance, I hold myself prepared to defend the consistency of my course against all assailants, although I am far from regarding consistency as the highest virtue of a public man. The motto upon the banner of John Hampden, “*vestigia nulla retrorsum*,” is rather too arrogant for an ordinary mortal whose judgment is always liable to error.

I have now disposed of all those questions which have been seized upon as a means of creating disquiet in the public mind. There is another side of the picture which the lovers of strife are not fond of exhibiting. There were healing measures—measures of conciliation and peace—about which they are careful to maintain a rigid silence.

We have obtained a territorial government for Utah—the whole of which lies north of 36 deg. 30 min.—not only without the proviso, but under circumstances which give the strongest grounds for hope that her State government, when formed, will be after the model most agreeable to us. The religion of the Mormons tolerates slavery. When they formed a constitution, some ten months since, they left the question of slavery precisely as it stands in Georgia and most of the other southern States. The judiciary act for the Territory recognizes the existence of slavery by necessary implication. Let me read you an extract from the address of the Hon. T. H. Bayly, of Virginia, to his constituents:

“The territorial bills and the fugitive slave bill each recognizes the legality of slavery in the Territories. In the former it is enacted that ‘writs of error and appeals from the final decisions of said Supreme Court shall be allowed, and may be taken to the Supreme Court of the United States, in the same manner and under the same regulations as from the circuit courts of the United States, where the value of the property or the amount in controversy, to be ascertained by the oath or affirmation of either party, or other competent witness, shall exceed one thousand dollars, except only that in all cases involving title to slaves the said writs of error or appeals shall be allowed and decided by the said Supreme

'Court without regard to the value of the matter, property, or title in controversy; and except, also, that a writ of error or appeal shall also be allowed to the Supreme Court of the United States from the decision of the said Supreme Court created by this act, or of any judge thereof, upon any writ of habeas corpus involving the question of personal freedom.'

"It will be perceived that there are two classes of cases here provided for—the last between the negro and his master, involving the question of his personal freedom; the first between other parties, involving title to slaves. This last clearly contemplates the existence of slavery in the Territories.

"Besides this, the act providing for the recapture of fugitive slaves throughout contemplates the escape of slaves from our Territories. It enacts 'that when any person held to service or labor in any State or Territory, or even in the District of Columbia, shall escape,' &c. Slavery is prohibited in Minnesota and Oregon; and if it is also prohibited in Utah and New Mexico, our only other Territories, then there is no subject to which a part of that law can refer."

A large part of New Mexico also lies north of 36° 30'. In that bill Mr. Toombs's amendment was incorporated, which enacts that every citizen shall be protected in his life, liberty, and *property*—of course including slaves. I know it is said that slavery can never go into New Mexico; but I have not been able to see the force of the reasoning by which the assertion is sustained. One *fact* is worth a thousand theories. When the New Mexicans adopted a constitution they recognized slavery in females to the age of eighteen, in males to the age of twenty-one, and *peonage* after, which is the most effectual kind of slavery. I therefore conclude that the strong probability is they will establish slavery for themselves. But suppose they do not, who is to blame? We have got all we asked in the bill, and if God and nature exclude slavery from the country, there is nothing of which we can rightfully complain.

The fugitive slave bill is another law passed at the instance of the South. You are constantly told that it will not be executed, and may be repealed. That a few crazy fanatics and runaway negroes will oppose the execution of the law is certain, and that they may sometimes succeed in evading its provisions is probable; but as a general rule it has been enforced, and I doubt not will continue to be so. Of the northern men who voted for it, eight have up to this time been candidates for reelection, and seven of the eight have been sustained—a clear indication of the determination of sober and reflecting men to discharge all the obligations imposed upon them by the Constitution.

And now, fellow-citizens, if these laws are permitted to stand undisturbed; if no serious attempt is made to repeal them; if they are executed, as I believe they will be, in good faith, I feel bound to say that you ought to be satisfied with the settlement which has been made. We did not get all we claimed, but we got more than was ever yielded by a majority to a minority before. With the absolute power to settle every question upon their own terms, they abandoned their favorite proviso, and guaranteed to the people of the Territories the right to regulate the question of slavery for them-

selves. They have manifested a sense of justice and an amount of fraternal regard of which I did not believe them capable. For their future action I have no fears. Spasmodic attempts will be made to keep up agitation at the North as well as at the South. Restless men—men of blind prejudices and headstrong passions—will assuredly say and do things calculated to disturb the harmony of the Republic. It may even be that in some States excitement may carry them to the verge of secession. I hope Alabama may not be found among the number. We have a deep stake in the preservation of the Union, and that must, indeed, be a serious grievance which can justify secession. Not quite twelve months since I saw for the first time the tomb of Washington. Clouds and darkness then hung over the land. Disunion was a familiar word. Most of us had lost confidence in the friendly disposition of our northern brethren, and were looking forward to a violent termination of the pending controversy. I gazed upon the spot where the remains of that great and good man repose, and asked to whom will he belong when we are divided? It was not for the South alone he fought; not for the South alone he spurned a kingly diadem. The South, indeed, gave him to the nation, but he gave to the whole land liberty and independence, and all alike are the heirs of his glory. The pilgrim from Bunker Hill, as well as he from Camden, has a right to visit that sacred spot, and kneel and worship there. His awful shade would rise to rebuke the section that dared appropriate him to itself. We cannot divide him, nor can we divide the trophies gathered on the bloody fields of the Revolution. Many a soiled banner, which once waved above a haughty foe, is now to be seen at the capital of the Republic, and the American who can look upon them and not feel his heart beat quicker and his step grow prouder and firmer, is unworthy of the name. All these were jointly won, and belong to us in common. In our own times we have created for our children a bond of amity which I fervently pray may endure forever. On more than one glorious field New England and South Carolina together faced the cannon's mouth and mingled their blood in a common pool. From the mouth of the Rio Grande to Buena Vista every hamlet is vocal with the story of American prowess. From Vera Cruz to the city of Mexico, all along the route the dauntless Spaniard trod—upon the very fields of his fame—American valor and American science have eclipsed even the wild romance of "The Conquest," and Hernando Cortez has yielded the laurel crown to Winfield Scott. It was not by the North or the South that this bright page of our story was written. Side by side they braved the pestilence; side by side they won victory after victory, and annihilated in one campaign the military power of a mighty nation.

No one ever thought of asking there whether the eyes of his comrade had first opened to the light of day in Maine or Louisiana. No one inquired from what section came the hand that stanchd his bleeding wounds or held the cup to his fevered lips. It was a brother's hand, no matter whence it came, and asked no recompense but a brother's love. If there was nothing else to bind this Union together, these are ties that no wise and good man would willingly sever.

Between secession and acquiescence in the meas-

ures passed by Congress there is no medium ground. If you are dissatisfied, there is no remedy but secession—no redress but civil war. I know that there are those who speak of resistance *within the Constitution*—of non-intercourse—of trading in your own cities—of encouraging your own mechanics. But that is not resistance; it is acquiescence—it is what you ought to do, even if there was no ground of complaint. The misfortune is, that those who say the most about it are the last to practice what they preach. If that is all the resistance they mean, I am with them. I wish I was at liberty to infer that nothing more is intended. In the letter requesting the Governor to convene the Legislature, other purposes are disclosed. *Secession* is declared to be the remedy. It therefore becomes a most pertinent question, what good any prudent man can promise himself from disunion? How are we to regain the losses we believe we have sustained on the Pacific coast? In what respect is it possible for our condition to be bettered? We cannot remand California—we cannot force slavery upon her. At the end of the contest, slavery, as it now exists, will not be extended over a single additional acre on the continent, but it is not improbable that another kind of slavery will throw its fetters over us all. A military despotism will grow up upon the ruins of the Republic, and coronets and titles of nobility disgrace the land of Washington and Jackson. If, then, any man asks me if I am in favor of disunion, I answer No! Nothing has been done that disunion can remedy, and I am not mad enough to rush into civil war from an idle fear that *something may be done hereafter*. There are grievances I would not bear; there are oppressions which ought to be resisted by every means which God and Nature have put into our hands; but they have not yet come upon us, and it is only the part of folly to anticipate them.

It does good occasionally to recur to the past, to trace out successive events in by-gone times, and learn from thence how disaster has been avoided and prosperity attained. There is much in our history that cannot too often be recalled to the memory of the citizen. It is full of instruction, and, if read aright, will serve to guide us through every peril of the future. But a brief period has elapsed in the age of nations since Jamestown and Plymouth Rock witnessed the landing of a strange race upon the North American continent. Trials and persecutions in the Old World sent them forth from the bosom of the society in which they had been reared, and that God in whose sacred cause they suffered came with them. They found a land fertile, indeed, beyond all they had ever known of fertility, but in which hardship and danger were the handmaids of existence. No walled town reared its spires to gladden the sight; the anvil and the hammer had never resounded along those gloomy shores; the ploughshare had never broken the soil, rich with the mould of centuries. Whatever could cheer and encourage; whatever could soften the asperities of life, or give to labor a charm—all were wanting. Wholly unconscious of founding an empire, they thought only of an asylum where God's worship should be unrestrained and God's creatures unfettered. Before their persevering industry the forests melted away; cultivated fields grew and flourished where late the panther made his lair; flocks and herds strayed

unmolested where the wild Indian had held his orgies and doomed his prisoners to the stake; all the arts of civilized life took root and flourished anew; education spread its blessings through the land:

“And Genius came, and all the tuneful race
Struck their glad lyres and owned their resting-place.”

The struggle with England which soon followed taught the colonies the necessity of union; and accordingly a feeble and imperfect confederation was effected, which served to hold them together while the presence of a foreign enemy menaced life and liberty. But the moment this external pressure was removed, its weakness and imbecility became painfully apparent. None of the States complied faithfully with their obligations to pay off the revolutionary debt, and New Jersey expressly refused. New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland passed navigation laws, treating the citizens of other States as aliens. Connecticut taxed imports from other States. Georgia carried on wars and made treaties with the Indians. Massachusetts raised and kept up armies without the consent of Congress. In many of the States depreciated paper was made a tender in the payment of debts, installment laws were passed, and the courts of justice closed. John Adams, in his inaugural message, thus describes the state of things which existed under the Confederation:

“Negligence of its regulations, inattention to its recommendations, if not disobedience to its authority, not only in individuals, but in States, soon appeared, with their melancholy consequences—universal languor; jealousies and rivalries of States; decline of navigation and commerce; discouragement of necessary manufactures; universal fall in the value of lands and their produce; contempt of public and private faith; loss of consideration and credit with foreign nations; and at length in discords, animosities, combinations, partial conventions, and insurrection, threatening some great national calamity.”

With this experience of the confusion and anarchy which existed prior to the adoption of our present Constitution, we should be careful how we risk a recurrence to similar scenes. We should remember that at this day all the evils enumerated would be aggravated a hundred-fold, and that we could only hope for peace when faction had been crushed by the hand of a military despot.

There is another portion of the history of that period which must not be overlooked. This is not the first time that dismemberment has found zealous advocates and supporters. Then as now there were men busily engaged in scattering poison through the land, in fanning the fires of sectional jealousy, and advocating the erection of two or more Confederacies, “either (says Mr. Madison) from a better chance of figuring on a sectional theatre, or because the sections would require stronger Governments, or by their hostile conflicts lead to a monarchical consolidation.

The good sense of the nation triumphed, and our present Constitution was the result. Under that Constitution we have been moving on with giant strides in the march to empire. From thirteen feeble, distracted, and divided colonies, a nation has arisen which all Europe in arms could not overrun. Our commerce has penetrated into every clime, and every sea is whitened with its sails. In all the achievements of war and all the arts of peace the North American Republic stands pre-

eminent, without an equal and without a rival. The citizen enjoys an amount of individual liberty unknown to any other land. The honors and emoluments of every office are open to the competition of all, and the man who guides the ploughshare to-day may be President to-morrow. I am not so weary of this happy state as to desire the destruction of the Constitution which has secured it. That the Government will sometimes work unequally, no one pretends to dispute. That there are and must be occasional grievances under it, is not to be denied. No human institution is perfect; but the rapid advancement of our own State to wealth and power is triumphant proof that we have not been called upon to endure any serious evil. Forty years ago Alabama was an almost unbroken wilderness; now it contains a population of at least seventy-five thousand voters, and its exports exceed those of the whole thirteen original States at the date of our independence. At this very moment you enjoy an amount of prosperity never surpassed, and any change must be for the worse. Then listen not to those who would urge you to engage in the mad work of agitation: like the serpent in the garden of Eden, they have Sin and Death for their followers, and have come to destroy the bloom of Paradise.

I hope it is no impiety to say that the foundations of this Republic were laid by God himself. Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Madison, and a thousand other sages and patriots of the Revolution, built up the glorious fabric. It has stood the test of time and trial. The winds have come, and the rain has beat upon it, but not a stone is shaken, not a rafter displaced. Beneath its shelter every civil right—every privilege of religion—has been protected and secured. For what, then, are we now asked to tear down with our own hands an edifice which the tempest is powerless to harm? What deadly malaria has penetrated its walls? What evil spirit has taken up his abode among the good genii of the place? What oppression is felt? What tyranny has cast its mildew on our happiness? None; none of these things have come upon us. Within and without prosperity is scattering around her gifts. Peace is yours. Plenty has spread her ample board, and woos contentment to her side. At a time like this are you prepared to exchange the blessings you enjoy for a banquet of blood? Are you so in love with murder that you are ready to raise your hands against a brother's life? Are wasted fields and smoking ruins so pleasant to your sight that you are willing to expose your own dwellings to destruction rather than not burn your neighbor's? Is there music to your ears in the shrieks of women or the despairing cries of helpless orphans? If you cannot give an affirmative answer to these questions, then stand by the Union; cling to the work of Washington and Madison; do not exchange it for a rickety concern built up by new and untried artisans; trust rather to the sages of the past, and guard with a miser's care the rich inheritance they have transmitted to you and to your children.

I have now something to say to the old supporters of Andrew Jackson, whom I see around me. You have passed through such a crisis once before; but the strong arm of the patriot hero then guided the helm, and the storm was weathered in safety. Not satisfied with having saved you then, he sought to guard you against similar dangers

through all future time, and accordingly, when about to retire to the walks of private life, he left you a legacy of priceless value. Let me read you a small portion of that address. Remember that he now speaks to you from the grave. He has been called from us to a home among the stars; and I adjure you, by all the love you bore him, by all the gratitude which is his due, by all the confidence you cannot help feeling in his wisdom and patriotism, to heed his warning:

"These cheering and grateful prospects and these multiplied favors we owe, under Providence, to the adoption of the Federal Constitution. It is no longer a question whether this great country can remain happily united and flourishing under our present form of government. Experience—the unerring test of all human undertakings—has shown the wisdom and foresight of those who framed it, and has proved that in the Union of these States there is a sure foundation for the brightest hopes of freedom and for the happiness of the people. At every hazard and by every sacrifice this Union must be preserved. * *

"What have you to gain by division and dissension? Delude not yourselves with the belief that a breach once made may afterwards be repaired. If the Union is once severed, the line of separation will grow wider and wider, and the controversies which are now debated and settled in the halls of legislation will be tried in fields of battle, and be determined by the sword. Neither should you deceive yourselves with the hope that the first line of separation will be the permanent one, and that nothing but harmony and concord would be found in the new associations formed upon the dissolution of the Union. Sectional interests would still be found there, and unchastened ambition. And if the recollection of common dangers, in which the people of these United States stood side by side against the common foe; the memory of the victories won by their united valor; the prosperity and happiness they have enjoyed under the present Constitution; the proud name they bear as citizens of this great Republic; if these recollections and proofs of common interest are not strong enough to bind us together as one people, what tie will hold this Union severed? The first line of separation would not last for a single generation; new fragments would be torn off; new leaders would spring up; and this great and glorious Republic would soon be broken into a multitude of petty States, armed for mutual aggressions, loaded with taxes to pay armies and leaders; seeking aid against each other from foreign Powers; insulted and trampled upon by the nations of Europe, until, harassed with conflicts and humbled and debased in spirit, they would be ready to submit to the absolute dominion of any military adventurer, and to surrender their liberty for the sake of repose. It is impossible to look on the consequences that would inevitably follow the destruction of this Government, and not feel indignant when we hear cold calculations about the value of the Union, and have so constantly before us a line of conduct so well calculated to weaken its ties.

"There is too much at stake to allow pride or passion to influence your decision. Never for a moment believe that the great body of the citizens of any State or States can deliberately intend to do wrong. They may, under the influence of tem-

porary excitement or misguided opinions, commit mistakes; they may be misled for a time by the suggestions of self-interest; but, in a community so enlightened and patriotic as the people of the United States, argument will soon make them sensible of their errors, and, when convinced, they will be ready to repair them. If they have no higher or better notions to govern them, they will at least perceive that their own interest requires them to be just to others, as they hope to receive justice at their hands."

This is the language of one whom detraction itself never dared to charge with a want of love for his country. It is for you to profit by his teaching.

My duty, fellow-citizens, is now discharged. I have not followed the example of those who

have arraigned me for trial by indulging in the use of harsh epithets or opprobrious terms. I have felt no wish to retaliate. Most of them are honest—most of them are patriotic; and if there be a few whose readiness to impute corrupt motives to others may well induce a suspicion of corruption in themselves, I can afford to let them pass unnoticed. The adder is harmless when its fangs are drawn. I neither feel anger nor wish to excite it in you. On the contrary, I commend to you the advice of Mr. JEFFERSON:

"If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union, or to change its republican character, let them stand undisturbed as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated when reason is left free to combat it."